

Let Them All Make One

By Judith Martin

"The last thing in the world I want to talk about—and I have this in common with the President—is Watergate," said Mort Sahl.

But whatever the President may feel he has to say to the public about Watergate, Mort Sahl and other comedians find that they, too, must go on records. Sahl's "Sing a Song of Watergate . . . Apocryphal of Lie" (Crescendo Records), is one of four long-playing talk records to appear within the last few weeks on the subject.

The others are "Mark Russell's Wild, Weird, Wired World of Watergate," (Deep Six Records), recorded at the Shoreham Hotel; and two voice-imitation satires, "David Frye's 'Richard Nixon: A Fantasy' (Buddha Records) and 'The Watergate Comedy Hour' (Make Music, Inc.).

They're a sharp answer to anyone who complained, during the early, staid years of the Nixon Administration, that there wasn't anything funny going on. Now the problem is that the hearings are funnier than the records.

We've all been point-in-time'd to death, and how many jokes can you listen to about how Nixon has to accept the resignations of his fine allies, Pat, Tricia and Julie?

Still, some of them have their moments.

Here is a Presidential press conference as presented by the "Watergate Seven" on the "Watergate Comedy Hour":

"Q: What do you person-

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ally know about the Watergate?

"A: I'm very glad that you asked that question. Let me say that I believe a grave injustice has been done here. A loss of integrity, a loss of reputation have humiliated what might have been a fine high rise apartment building.

"Q: What I'm really talking about is he break-in and the bugging of the Democratic National Headquarters on 17 June, 1972; the arrest and conviction of the Watergate Seven, and the subsequent disclosures that members of your staff had knowledge of this illegal act and afterwards tried to whitewash any investigation and lied to protect themselves and other high members of your administration.

"A: Could you be more specific?"

And on the David Frye, you get the Presidential statement:

"As the man in charge, I, of course, accept the full responsibility. But not the blame. Let me explain the difference. People who are to blame lose their jobs. People who are responsible do not."

The Frye voices, incidentally, are better—that is to say, closer—than the Watergate Comedy Hour ones.

You can almost hear those jowls shaking.

But in neither record is there any attempt to make the women's voices accurate — possibly because who knows Mrs. Nixon's anyway? Even Fanny Flagg, who did such a brilliant job of Mrs. Lyndon Johnson exhorting people to go out and plant "a tree, a shruuuuuub or a buuuuush" anywhere, delivers simply Standard Southern as Martha Mitchell (with the lovely explanation of her denunciations as having to destroy John in order to save him.)

Frye presents a variety of other well-known voices, including Marlon Brando's, when he has Nixon going to visit the Godfather with a plea beginning, "My fellow Italian-American."

Russell doesn't do voices, but he does a few songs for our time: The President's lament, "Watergate Is Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine," and a warning on the subject of executive privilege, "If you go up to the Hill today, you'd better go in disguise . . . The President's orders are perfectly clear. Your job will be gone when you get back here . . ."

And Sahl just lets loose with his own thoughts:

LEISURE

Thing Perfectly Clear

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On polls, "63 per cent think he was involved, 29 per cent, according to the Harris poll, believe he was not involved, and nine per cent—were involved, I guess."

On American history, "There were four million people in the colonies, and

we had Jefferson, Paine, Franklin—fantastic. Now we've got 208 million, and the top two guys are McGovern and Nixon. What do you draw from this? Darwin was wrong!"

On the difference between soldiers captured in Korea,

as he was, and the Vietnam POWs, "We came out, we were looking for girls. They shake hands with two generals and go to the microphone and make a speech, 'God Bless President Nixon,' and then they go to their wives. Fourth priority.

"The majority of them—you'll find this on the records—were shot down during the administration of President Johnson, when Nixon was a lawyer with Pepsi Cola, so that means the word of how good a lawyer he was must have reached even North Vietnam."